Djuka

/3 cont./

123 In connection with what I have already said concerning an agreement concluded by me with them, I regard it as not inappropriate to give here a sketch of the manner in which I was requested to enter into this agreement with them, and what happened before they came to an agreement with me in such an extraordinary manner.

After I had already dealt with them for some time in an increasingly open manner and my journeys to visit them had become more frequent, some of the chiefs confidentially notified me that, although they had already come to know me over a considerable period of time and regarded me as a good and honest man, since they had experienced better treatment from me than from many others with whom they had previously had dealings, they could nonetheless not simply assume that I would always remain the same and that possibly I had completely different intentions with regard to them which they might later regret. For this reason many of them had still been reluctant to commit themselves definitely to work for me. In order to do away completely with this mistrust among them, I continued to stay with them in the bush for a considerable time and always demonstrated that I had honest intentions with regard to them, until after a few weeks, as a result of the open-handed giving away of food and drink, I noticed that I was short of everything and was forced to send my vessel to Paramaribo in order to fetch what was needed, whereby I found myself completely alone among them.

123 675 [622] When thus, after the departure of my vessel, I spent a number of hours talking about my plans with the headman of the village, called Sparri Passi (1), in his hut, he strongly advised me

1. Sparri (a large flat fish) way.

to conclude at this time the agreement customary among them. I agreed and immediately requested him to accompany me via a bush path to the nearest village, Manjaondro (2), in order to

2. Under the manja tree.

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[501]

/3 cont./
request the captain residing there, Kwassi jenni, to man all the available korjalen (3) and to send them around to the camps of

3. Small vessels made out of tree trunks.

the Bush Negroes, in order to notify all the Aukaners /Aucaners/ /4/ in that district that I, sojourning entirely by myself among them, wished to see them all together so as to have the opportunity, in the place to be determined by them and in accordance with their manner and customs, to take the oath of agreement to remain at all times faithful to one another.

Three days were spent in deliberations and consultations among various captains, council members, and elders, before I could succeed in obtaining their consent for this.

[527] Finally, however, it was decided to have the agreement ceremony take place on Friday (a day that is holy among them), when the sun reached its midday point.

On this day, around eleven o'clock in the forenoon, one of the oldest and most influential among them took a clean teacup, put in it some dram mixed with herbs, and took a few finely ground plants which he moistened with river water and squeezed over the cup.

I and seven of the most important people then had three small slashes cut into the right hand with a razor. The blood from this, having been taken up with a little flock of cotton, was also squeezed into the cup, and the cotton washed out with river water and wrung out so often that no more signs of blood showed in it. The one and the other having been thoroughly stirred in the cup, the latter was placed on a stool in the open air. At twelve o'clock exactly, a great number of men, women, and children gathered around the stool on which the cup stood, by the side of which they placed me.

Three gunshots were fired. Among all those present a profound silence reigned, whereupon the cup was offered, first to me and then to the other seven persons whose blood was mingled with mine, in order to drink a draught from the contents, whereupon it had to go around to all the men so that, however little, they would

123 /4 cont./
●675 drink something from it or merely smell it; indeed! when it was empty, the remaining men who had not yet drunk from it or smelled it had to lick it.

I was then embraced by the headmen and many of the women; they flung the right arm over my left shoulder and the left arm under my right arm and rested their heads for a moment against my right cheek.

[273] After the conclusion, while much dram was drunk, general exuberant gaiety prevailed, and only then was /5/ I told that they had purposely cut me first and given me a drink first in order to ascertain whether I trusted them completely or whether, so entirely by myself, I would have been afraid to submit to their wishes and to do what they demanded of me; they assured me that if I had refused to be the first, none of them would have wanted to conclude the agreement with me.

If, therefore, I had not conducted myself as they wished, I would have missed out completely on this alliance which was so highly important and profitable for me.

466 On the following day many of them came to tell me that
313 their work places on the river Cottica supplied little of the kinds of wood that had been pointed out by me for processing, but they declared themselves ready to go and process them immediately for me on the Upper Commewijne river, where they were sure of finding richer forests.

Since the last-named river was closed to them at that time by a governmental decree, I made a request for access in the year [361] 1854, in order to be able to work with them at this river. This was granted to me, and since then a few hundred Bush Negroes have been staying there and have laid out dwellings and croplands, while they continuously, with unexampled industry, process the wood needed by me and deliver it to the sawmill.

/290 cont./

695 461 157 The Refugee Blacks have a sense of contract to a high degree, and they bring /291/ to the execution of work to which they have committed themselves qualities of seriousness, initiative, and a sense of duty not found to the same degree in Black Africa.

157 671 571 Refusal of any lasting commitment. If the Refugee Blacks honor their contracts, they do not like to commit themselves for a long period.

This attitude results from their desire for independence, but also from the moral and religious law which governs their society.

This law forbids infringing on the liberty of persons, humiliating anyone, and doing anything which might be able to plunge him into anger or affliction. Its effect is to prevent any exploitation of the weak, any creation of a servant or proletarian caste. It even leads to the absence of any permanent subordination of one man to another.

[466] The desire for independence of the Refugee Blacks makes them unwilling to bind themselves definitively to a job, however profitable. When a man judges that he has put aside sufficient savings, he leaves the job which furnished him with these resources.

[464] This tendency makes the search for paid work much more difficult and hazardous; it happens that a man may stay for years without finding gainful work, living in straitened circumstances. But that is the price of independence, and it is accepted without hesitation.